

Survey: 70% of community college students work—and for many, it's too much



Supporting these students is an 'ongoing challenge,' one president says

October 29, 2015

Seventy percent of community college students also work, according to a new WGBH News poll, and community colleges are working to find the right levels of support.

Many work full-time, and one-third of those who left school said it was because of work responsibilities.

While some students can balance work and school, it often takes longer for them to graduate, says Shanna Jaggars, an assistant director at Community College Research Center at Columbia University.

"The longer it takes for a student to get through something, the more likely it is that some kind of event will come up in their life that will derail them and induce them to say, 'I can't handle this right now,'" Jaggars says.

In order to accommodate students who must split their time, community colleges offer night, weekend, and online classes, as well as financial support in the form of grants.

But many still struggle to reach graduation. At Cape Cod Community College, for example, just 14% of students graduate within three years—and 71% work.

The school is working to improve their graduation rate, but it is a process that takes time, says President John Cox.

"We've recognized that not everybody can make it to campus," Cox says. "It's an ongoing challenge. We're looking at more methods, ways to increase the online and the blended learning opportunities that we have" (Carapezza, "[On Campus](#)," WGBH News, 10/27).